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that title
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DUTY

OF

A WIFE.

By Frederick Smith

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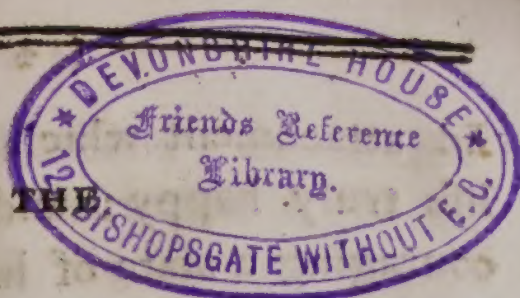
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ON THE

DUTY OF A WIFE.

I WAS much gratified the other day upon hearing the sentiments of a Lady, on the subject of the attention due to a husband from his wife. I remarked that my observations had led me to believe, that most women after their marriage, were too careless and inattentive in preserving the empire they had obtained over their husbands during courtship; and that for want of regulating their conduct by proper rules of tenderness and affection, together with inattention to the disposition and temper of their husbands, oftentimes endangered the loss of that so-

" Ad attachment which renders a married
 " life truly happy; and by gradually en-
 " couraging a state of indifference, too fre-
 " quently ends in separation; and perhaps
 " in some degree for want of these neces-
 " sary attentions, though apparently of
 " small importance, are notwithstanding,
 " in some cases, the best test of a woman's
 " real affection. — To which she replied,
 " I fear your observations are too just.
 " It is an extraordinary circumstance, that
 " among the number of young persons
 " I have conversed with on the subject of
 " matrimony, I do not recollect an in-
 " stance where this point had ever been
 " considered by them, or that any in-
 " structions on this head had ever been
 " given by either parents or guardians.
 " It is a subject I have fully weighed in
 " my own mind; and it has made so deep
 " an impression on me, that next to my
 " duty to the Supreme Being, I consider

" my duty to my husband; not in the
 " abstract way which the world in general
 " consider it, but as a momentous con-
 " cern in which our mutual happiness is
 " materially involved. As some proof of
 " the sincerity of my observations, my
 " husband the other day, said he should
 " like a picture in the parlour changed
 " to another place, and a different one
 " placed there in its stead; and though I
 " was satisfied it would not correspond
 " with the picture on the other side," (of
 " which I had full proof;) " yet, as it was
 " his wish, and he might feel disappointed,
 " if it was not done, I therefore did not
 " hesitate to make the alteration. Another
 " thing was, he said he should wish to see
 " me dress in black; and accordingly I
 " put on a black gown, remarking, that
 " it was of no importance what I dress-
 " ed in; my desire was to make my hus-
 " band happy, and by every means in.

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" my power to avoid the necessity of dispute, and endeavour to make his home a place of comfort and satisfaction to him."

I was much struck with this truly wise proof of condescension, which led me into a train of reflections. I considered that by thus keeping up the bond of union between married persons, would depend the comfort and happiness they expect to enjoy in reciprocal love and affection: that they should have a tender regard for the feelings of each other, and not get into habits wantonly of contradicting or of opposing in trifling matters.

It is granted that many men possess a great deal of irritation; and perhaps demand more attention from their wives than they have any just reason to expect; such persons are not aware that their wives are made of the same materials as them-

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selves, and that if love and charity were the coverings of their minds, their conduct would be very different.

The condescension and strict attention of a wife under such circumstances, to a heart not altogether lost to every feeling of gratitude, would sometimes cause a degree of compunction, which it is not romantic to believe, would at last soften his disposition, and prove a rich reward for her patience under the suffering she may have endured.

It is a weak idea to suppose that the husband, will at all times be expressing the same tenderness he did whilst paying his addresses to his wife; many occurrences and disappointments take place in the course of his concerns in life, either in trade or otherwise, that often afflict him, and these things may have a tendency to irritate and put a person into what is called

an ill humour: the wife, who is not ignorant of these circumstances, tho' she may frequently feel the effects of his disturbed mind, yet should by every soft and tender means, endeavour to bear with and sooth him by every little kind attention, tho' at the expence of her own natural will and inclination; the effect would be, when the storm subsided and reason returned, that sensations of love and affection, and not unfrequently heartfelt contrition, the pleasing reward for such prudent and reasonable conduct. Yet how different is the behaviour of some women! Every little contradiction is magnified into a crime; and the opposition which prudence may sometimes dictate is construed into a want of tenderness; the little particularities which the husband may have, tho' not criminal, he is continually thwarted in; and no allowance made for natural disposition, or human weakness: if a wife who thus

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Dr. Johnson
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acts lose the confidence of her husband, she has only herself to blame, and should he fall into any snare, which through her coolness and want of affection he may have yielded to, the censure will in a great degree belong to herself.

Dr. Johnson has remarked in a few words, “ that should a husband once be
 “ guilty of an indiscreet action, a wife
 “ ought not greatly to resent it; she
 “ should study to reclaim her husband
 “ by more attention to please him. A man
 “ will not once in a hundred times leave
 “ his wife, if she has not been negligent
 “ of pleasing.”

Women, if they wish to be happy, should at all times endeavour to make themselves agreeable to their husbands; they should not, at any period of their lives, think it too much trouble to stu-

dy to retain their affections. It has been the observation of many, that during courtship women have made neatness and cleanliness in dress a pleasing and enchanting means of fascinating their admirers; but which, after marriage they have totally neglected and become downright slatterns: and it is observable that as they draw towards the decline of life, they are still more negligent in these respects. Little as these things may be thought of, women may be assured they are often times of great importance. The flame of love should be continually kept alive by every honorable means; and no inducement can be so worthy, as the happiness of the husband.

The natural consequence is, that tho' the husband is thus won by kind attention, the wife enjoys the comfort in every possible degree. For want of due attention

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in these respects how often do we see the streams of love forced from their proper boundaries into an impure channel, thro' the negligence, unkindness or ill nature of a thoughtless Wife; more careful to support her own supposed dignity; than to either retain, secure or cultivate the affections of her partner. Alas, mistaken woman! how much misery dost thou bring on thyself, how much agony of soul on thy wretched husband? Could'st thou but see the poor unhappy wretch in some of his solitary moments, deprived of those blessings he had panted to enjoy; and instead of that peaceful abode he once flattered himself he was secure in, he has not whereon to lay his head! To draw the thoughts of his miserable situation from his disturbed brain, he is tempted to seek relief at the tavern, the theatre, or perhaps in the company of some other female, to endeavour to forget those pangs

he has lately endured ; and thus he sinks a miserable object in the sight of himself—of the world—and of his God !

The poor deluded woman has apprehended she has been wonderfully keensighted, and has plumed herself in her great penetration ; and has imagined, she has long since discovered the propensities of her now lost husband ; and that all her fears and jealousies are now realized ; not reflecting that herself has been the dupe of her uncontrouled passions, which was the alone cause of his present misery. How much more to be admired, and how much more to her real happiness would it have been, instead of continually opening a wound, which by repeating the operation, has become so irritable as to fester, and to cause the most excruciating torture, had she soothed him with that tenderness and affection his situation demanded ;

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which would often have healed and stilled the little storms arising from many disappointments and oppositions in his worldly concerns. Thus she would have added to the stock of her husband's endearments, and, doubtless, have retained those sweet affections her ill-judged imprudence has for ever lost.

It is a fact, established by woeful experience, that the situation of such a man is dreadful beyond description. Yet let it be remembered, that it would be preposterous to suppose, because a woman does not all in her power to please, it is any warrant for a man to act wrong; it may, perhaps be the very means appointed by Providence to try his faith and patience. The combat may be sore and trying, but the victory over temptation will be glorious.